

ADDRESS BY
HON. D. GOKHOL, MINISTER OF
INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND RESEARCH

WORKSHOP ORGANISED BY
THE MSB IN THE CONTEXT OF THE
WORLD STANDARDS DAY

WEDNESDAY 14 OCTOBER 2009
AT 09 15 HRS

MSB COMPLEX – MOKA

Chairperson of Standards Council

Mr. Khemraj Ramful, Director, MSB

Participants

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

A very good morning to all of you

I am very pleased to be among you on the occasion the workshop organized by the MSB in the context of the World Standards Day which marks the 62nd anniversary of the founding of the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO).

It is an opportune and important time for us to reflect on the role of standards in society and also focus on the theme chosen by ISO that is, TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE THROUGH STANDARDS. This workshop will, therefore, focus on these issues.

I am delighted to see among the participants, representatives of different economic sectors, including both private and public sector. I am also pleased to see students. It is a good sign that students are showing keen interest in Standardisation and climate change.

Today's students will be the leaders of tomorrow and getting them involved in standardisation at a young age can contribute to a more sustainable development, and a better future.

The creation of a new Ministry for Industry, Science and Research last year was a clear signal from the Government that Science and Technology must contribute towards a new model of sustainable development. And my Ministry, and organizations falling under my Ministry together with our stakeholders, we are committed to promoting this new model of development.

The International Standards Organisation

The International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) is a non-governmental body comprising some 162 national standards organisations. Standards refer to established, approved scientific requirements for the conduct of activities and/or their outcomes. ISO sets standards that often become law, either through treaties or national standards. The Mauritius Standards Bureau has been a member body of ISO since 1995 and is actively engaged in international standardisation activities. With the assistance of ISO, MSB has recently upgraded its IT tools and software to improve its standards development activities and enhance its participation in international standardisation.

On the occasion of the World Standards Day, MSB and other National Standards Bodies around the world take the opportunity to highlight the vital role of standards and their impact on the life of people. The role of standards in establishing quality and process standards, facilitating trade, ensuring

safety and health, as well as protecting the environment is underscored. It is also an occasion to pay tribute to all those who have supported and contributed to the national standardisation programmes in their own countries. I understand there are some local experts working with MSB on its Standard Committees to elaborate Mauritian Standards and I would like to thank all of them for their important work.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Theme

The theme for this year's World Standards Day namely, TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE THROUGH STANDARDS, is most appropriate since climate change is not a future scenario, but today's reality. The planet is warming at an increasingly growing rate. As a result, sea levels are rising, coastal zones are becoming eroded, natural disasters are increasing in intensity, droughts last longer, snow cover on earth is decreasing and glaciers are melting. Numerous plant and animal species risk extinction, vector-borne diseases are spreading and our biodiversity is jeopardized. From politicians to scientific experts, industrialists and consumers, climate change concerns all, and the serious consequences it poses to our health, lifestyle, safety and environment will be felt irrespective of location or other distinction.

Since a few years now, we have been witnessing dramatic and unprecedented changes in weather conditions never seen before. It is as if

there is some sort of rebellion of nature against man's abuse of natural resources. I think that all this calls for urgent actions both at global and national levels.

2009 is indeed a crucial year concerning international effort to address climate change, which will culminate in the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark at the end of this year. The purpose is to forge a new climate treaty to replace the Kyoto Protocol.

Energy Efficiency

Energy will be at the heart of the discussion since energy-related carbon dioxide emissions accounts for most of green house gas emissions. The need for the deployment of more efficient energy solutions cannot be overemphasized and this would involve many actors coming from a variety of organisations, including government, industry, energy-intensive businesses, consumers, NGO's and standards organisations- virtually all economic sectors. It is inevitable that the objectives of the disparate interests vary and sometimes even conflict. It is my opinion that this is where standards could play a very important role in meeting the common objectives and promoting good practices. I understand that ISO is at present working on the development of new standards on Energy Management. I would ask MSB to organise a workshop on this important subject in 2010, and create public awareness on the issue.

The European Union has set a target of a 20% energy efficiency improvement by 2020. I can see no reason why Mauritius cannot achieve or even exceed this target. A framework of the long-term energy strategy and

action plan has already been drafted for the country and is in line with the Maurice Ile Durable Vision.

In terms of energy supply, Mauritius is reliant on imported sources to more than 90%. From a broader perspective, the consumption of fossil fuels by the emerging giants China and India over the past few years have pushed energy prices to higher levels, while the geopolitical situation in the Gulf States have had significant impacts on the price of oil, causing significant volatility. The price of oil reached a peak of USD 147 in July 2008 followed by a drastic fall to about USD 60. Coupled with the financial crisis in the USA and Europe, a global economic downturn is currently being experienced. Some experts predict that the price of oil will soar again. The high reliance on fossil fuels, therefore, bears economic risks for Mauritius. I believe that Mauritius, being a tropical island, can harness much more of the renewable sources and decrease significantly its reliance on fossil fuels. This is the path Government intends to follow.

Green and Clean Industry

My Ministry is taking necessary measures to encourage a green and clean industry. This year, we organised a workshop on Greener and more sustainable industry in collaboration with UNIDO. My ministry itself has started to implement in-house environmental friendly practices. UNIDO is prepared to assist Mauritius to establish a Resource Efficient and Cleaner Production Centre, which can play a crucial role in fostering sustainable production and consumption.

Ladies and gentlemen

Buildings in general account for around 40% of energy use. Studies by the International Energy Agency (IAE) show that a long-term 70% reduction in energy consumption is possible in new buildings in most OECD countries, with little or no additional costs for the owners. I am happy to announce that MSB has initiated a project on Green Building Certification and I hope this service could be provided to our local stakeholders in 2010.

I can see that technology will play an important role in this area. While buildings are traditionally only consumers of energy, the future buildings will be active players in energy management – they will be producers as well as consumers. In the years to come, buildings will be fitted with appropriate technology to produce electricity from the sun and wind – they may be connected and managed with the electrical grid. ICT and connectivity can now help optimize building energy behavior. Electric vehicles will interface with buildings and there will be new electricity storage technologies.

It is expected that there will be a shift of investment towards energy efficiency projects and cleaner technologies.

Ladies and gentlemen

The Role of Standards

I understand that during this Workshop, the role of standards and how standards can help tackle climate change will be discussed. I believe that there are three important issues have to be addressed:

- First, developing common understanding through standardisation of terms and terminology used for energy efficiency, renewable energy, environmental issues, etc.;
- Second, standardisation of methods of measurement and indicators as what cannot be measured according to accepted parameters cannot be managed; and
- Third, developing good practices and standardising as these good practices improve efficiency in the use of resources.

I am given to understand that ISO is working on these issues. For my part I will exhort MSB to give special attention to standards development and promotion in the area of environmental and energy management.

Conclusion

Ladies and Gentlemen

The world is facing tremendous challenges as a result of unbridled exploitation of natural resources. Its effect on climate is clearly evident. Globally and locally we have to get our acts together to tackle issues related to climate change. This can only be done by promoting sustainable

production and consumption. The theme of the World Standard Day is a strong reminder of the urgent need for concerted action in this regard. And standards relating to climate change is a global urgency and it must be of interest to each and every citizen.

Before ending, let me congratulate the staff of MSB for their initiative to organise this workshop together with other events like a workshop involving students on the theme and an open day on this Friday 16 October. I wish you a fruitful workshop and success in the endeavour.

Thank you for your attention.